

When the American Buyer Makes a Pilgrimage of Styles to Bring "the Latest Paris Models," Good as Well as Bad, to America



He is, indisputably, the first to see all the new gowns, ahead of the most fashionable Paris woman, he, the wholesale American buyer.

Always a certain number of dresses shown, that are utterly impractical, what the Paris trade calls "ugly gowns."

Behold the Janitor's kid to-day! In perfumed luxury, she is the pet of gracious women. They talk clothes, they live clothes!

"Don't take it, madame," said the great man dress-maker; but she was pigheaded and suspicious.

Pitfalls for Commercial Buyers and Ordinary Customers and How the Season's Frocks Are Decided Upon

DOES America get the latest Paris styles? Can the average American woman learn to pick the real thing before the craze has come to make it common?

Yes, but it is a secret. I see fair women on the spot, in Paris, eagerly studying the special fashion quarters and the fashion photographs of Paris daily papers; yet their hearts and minds are not satisfied. They buy one gown from a great Rue Royale establishment in order to see twenty models. Yet they are not sure. They rubber through the accessories at the fashionable noon hour, when rich and elegant women try the newest things. But which of the new things will take? They stand meditative before the beautifully dressed wax mannequins of the department stores show window and compare their judgment with that of secondary Paris commerce. The Paris department stores often give a hint of what will take.

Would you be almost as well informed as these Paris women? Here goes. But first, why do some women choose their clothes so badly? Why do others always look well? Artfully I lead you by the hand to breathe the higher, rarer atmosphere of dress. Take children, to begin with, for children can't offend, and there are children's styles.

Some from childhood have the clothes instinct. Such was the 7-year-old daughter of a janitor in the Rue Daunou. The little one's clothes were never soiled nor mused. Her cheap little clothes clung to her with an indescribable air of distinction. She loved pretty things, recollected instinctively from her mother.

The milliner's apprentice girl next door permitted Line to sit and watch them. It was a cheap, small milliner's, but taste and fancy are in the air of the Rue Daunou, and the girls made her a little coat and cap in which she looked a little angel.

Up and down the Rue Daunou passed a famous man dressmaker. He took Line in at a glance and asked her mother for her. He needed the child in his business. That was two years ago.

Behold the Janitor's child to-day. In the perfumed luxury of vast apartments the Rue Vendôme a patrician who Line is the pet of gracious women and beautiful girls. I say beautiful girls because all seem beautiful; even the plainer faced have the charm of taste and harmony with elegant environment. Every one is perfectly dressed, and the furniture, decorations, atmosphere, society, are also perfect.

They talk clothes. They live clothes. But in no vulgar way. It is art and the evocation of artistic ages. Men with careworn, distinguished features and long, white, nervous fingers bring great portfolios full of water color sketches of new styles of clothes.

It is perhaps the most exclusive department of any dressmaking establishment in Paris. Few of them have children's departments. In it Line and three others live like princely children in an ancient court. They are continually trying on new styles, adorable frocks, child novelties from art and history which fond parents can't resist. When Line is called into the parlors in a sublime slip of embroidered muslin from the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent and a lace cap worth \$80 she knows that she will be petted by great ladies, while rich children steal round her. Line is a mannequin—but a child mannequin.

What a difference! She has none of the humiliations, heart burnings, jealousies, despair and cold insults of the grown up cloak model. The innocence of her child mind shines in her face, and there is not a rich woman customer in Paris who would have the nerve to tarnish it with a sarcasm. No one ever called little Line a walking clothes horse, second cousin to the sandwich man.

It may come later if she neglects her opportunities. If she goes along without ambition she may grow to be a big girl mannequin—the kind who comes back from the races in the lively automobile, takes off the new creation which belongs to the establishment, slips into her old suit and walks home in the drizzling twilight, tears in her eyes and humiliation in her heart.

Line will not grow up like that. The grown mannequin is supposed to be a charming stick, with no brains, no commercial tact, no artistic invention, no thought higher than to take bonbons on the sly or stand admiring her artistic person before the pier glass when playing the great lady at the races, where she is really sent to show the house's clothes.

Her salary never increases. She has no percentage. She has no right to speak in the parlors. Saleswomen are jealous of her looks and easy life, rich customers are nasty to her, because, no matter how stupid the mannequin may be, however humble her origin, she has just the right figure in her skin-tight black satin sheath (otherwise she could not be a mannequin) and the born gift of putting herself into any gown and making it alive.

Line's play in the parlors becomes misery to grown up mannequins. They must walk with mincing grace, turn,

strike an attitude, display the freedom of their bodies in the new creation, show its front, its back, its sides, and stand immobile, all before a hostile audience. Dismissed they must walk out, and come back in another.

Ten such humiliating slave market imitations, and all begins again. Rich women chat deferentially with saleswomen and premieres; they have only cut orders for the lovely mannequin. For a poor girl it seems an ideal life of lazy grace. Yet it is poisoned. Their great chance is a noble marriage. Nearly all the beautiful and the more intelligent escape in this way. The number of Rue de la Paix cloak models who have espoused titles is astonishing. They make charming wives for rich men who enjoy a quiet life.

Line will do better. She will grow up one of these enviable personages—a high class Paris style designer. Starting so young, her natural bent will take her there. It is a charming life, among artistic things, where all is high, pure, serene. Delving into the past, reviving, adapting, creating, courted by rich women who crave an exclusive idea, mingling equally with artists and ar-

tists, bound up in history, literature and aesthetics, here will be the joy of beauty—though she may never be rich.

Now, how approximate to dress as Line will dress?

It is easy to come running at the tail end of the procession; but how keep near the front? The Atlantic separates you. False starts are caused by the bad taste of wholesale buyers. And you must also take account of the New York sub-styles. There is an American taste which may not be disregarded. And the Frenchiest of Paris gowns loses some of its atmosphere when transplanted. The successful American buyers know this.

Mistakes and breaks of wholesale buyers. A great American importing house can be and often is let in for failures. When they duplicate them fifty times in America, some one will have to buy them. Not you? You'd rather be excused. I have been much of late with American wholesale buyers, in and out of the great exhibitions which the most famous ladies' tailors, dressmakers and milliners of Paris hold for them—behind closed doors. I have seen experienced ones laugh at a new buyer

for picking out ugly styles and trial balloons. Three such wholesale buyers from Vienna, New York and London were at Jeanne Castel's. Of five particular hats, each bought all five; there was no doubt. Concerning ten others they laughed, disputed and "kidded" each other's choice. When their bills were made out, each had a lot of different hats. They paid the highest retail price—from \$95 to \$50—and hurried off with their hats and various memoranda.

Each memorandum is made up of lists, descriptions and addresses. It is the pedigree of the hat. It tells where the duplicate form may be bought wholesale, and each detail of trimming with its name, quantity and wholesale price. So each buyer hastened to his address and bought enough material to reproduce each hat fifty times.

Each did the same at Georgette's, at Esther Meyer's, at Lewes's. Do they imagine that all of them will be an equal success in Paris? Certainly not. They know that half their purchases will fall more or less dead in Paris. But those five hats which are aired upon will, likely, make a hit. The eye of the trade sees it, the temperament of the trade feels it.

Two other hats Jeanne Castel forced on them. All accepted but the London man; she fought it out with him and conquered.

All of the three laughed at a new buyer for a really great American house who insisted on picking up a dozen "ugly hats," which he took to be magnificent novelties.

Novel they were.

Will they take at home?

Will each of his ugly hats be duplicated fifty times? And will you, perhaps, buy one, madame? I will tell you how to avoid it. It looks very, very novel—like the howling novelty it is. Truly gowns are more dangerous, because more important. My buyer friend explained it to me in his didactic way.

"Here is where the unwary and inexperienced may easily go astray," he said. "At the beginning of each season there are always a certain number of dresses shown which are utterly impractical—what the dressmakers call 'ugly gowns.' These are made to give piquancy and interest to the exhibitions and are often amusing, but like the ornaments on a cake they are only made to look at."

"These ugly dresses sometimes prove a temptation to the inexperienced buyer, who mistakes their eccentricity or startling characteristics as representing the true Parisian note—whence disappointment later on."

"The individual woman tourist buying Paris gowns for herself plunges even oftener on these ugly gowns. She is misled not so much by bad taste as by anxiety to make friends at home jealous."

"After a trip to Paris," said the wholesale buyer, "friends at home often ex-

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Child With Instinct for Dress a Lesson for Women Who Are Hunting for the Latest Fashions

Thirdly and fourthly, to speak of the buyers sent over by American retail houses to visit the authoritative fashion displays which take place around February 15, for the spring season, and August 15, for the winter season, these do get the best of everything Paris has. These buyers choose their models, and to show.

In a few weeks they are in America. A flying trip over to Paris would find the same things in the French salons as in the best of the American stores.

The idea that the Paris dressmakers prepare two sets of models, one for the French trade and one for the American, is absolutely erroneous. It would cost far too much, and many people will perhaps hardly believe that at the beginning of the season the dressmakers of Paris scarcely know what the coming fashions will be. Each house knows its own models and has its own ideas as to what new styles are likely to be adopted, but as to what their competitors are preparing behind their carefully guarded doors they know very little.

Even in Paris fashions vary. One house favors one style and another something different; but at the same time there are certain ideas which are expressed by all in a certain number of their models. Exactly as with those five hats which all three buyers, English, Viennese and American, at once agreed on.

Now, do you see, dear madam? You have only to avoid eccentricities in order to be better informed than your average Paris sister.

As the Paris buyers of the great American department stores and other high class retailers regularly stand between you and ugly models, which often deceive tourists.

Yes, but what about "failures" and "has-beens?"

You have only to follow carefully the foremost Paris illustrated and come weeklies, not the fashion papers or the fashion pages, but the pictured costumes in designs of the great illustrators of Paris life in *L'Illustration*, the *Vie Parisienne*, the *Rire* and *Souffrir*.

These amiable illustrators have no task to illustrate fashions as their products are the more precious. They illustrate Paris life of the moment in gay, sparkling and elegant sides. They absorb unconsciously those certain ideas expressed by all great dressmakers—the very ones which you desire to pick up in American retail trade.

Then, being sure you're right, buy with both hands, right and left.

How to get the money for it I will tell in a later article.

With Commodore Perry in Japan in 1853—John A. Lewis, Who Was Then Serving on an American Warship, Tells How the United States Opened the Domain of the Mikado to the Commerce of the World.

IN the early '50s Japan was a closed country as far as international trade and intercourse were concerned, a veritable terra incognita. Efforts had long been made by the commercial nations to penetrate the wall of national isolation, but without avail. The nearest approach was gained temporarily by Holland, which succeeded in obtaining restricted trade privileges at two ports, but under conditions said to be somewhat humiliating.

It was under such conditions that the United States Government dispatched Commodore Perry with a small squadron to Nippon to obtain some definite stipulation in the form of a treaty for mutual commercial profit to the two countries. In order to impress the Japanese with the serious character of the movement, the squadron was composed of the finest and most noteworthy ships in the American navy at the time, carrying a large number of sailors and marines and more than the usual complement of guns, mostly heavy ordnance. Commodore Perry sailed from the United States in the steamship *Mississippi* in November, 1852, touched at Madeira and the Cape of Good Hope, reached Hongkong in the month of April, 1853, and thence headed for Japan.

In the Veterans Home, Napa county, California, still survives, at the age of 83 years, John A. Lewis, who sailed with Perry on this historical voyage. Lewis was a sailor on board the United States sloop *St. Mary*, patrolling the Mediterranean at the time the gold rush was on in California in '49. A few years later Perry began preparing his ships in New York Harbor for the expedition to Japan and Lewis was among the first to join. In narrating his experiences Lewis said:

"After unting all the vessels of the squadron Perry led in the flagship *Mississippi* and we made Cape Idzu in July, 1853. The first anchorage and intercourse with the natives was near the town of Uraga. In the same month a Japanese Prince gave Commodore Perry a formal reception on shore. Our commander was clothed with diplomatic powers and handed the Prince a letter written by Edward Everett, then Secretary of State, and signed by President Fillmore.

"Ample time having been given the Japanese authorities to decide upon what course they would pursue, the American squadron, which had temporarily withdrawn, now appeared in the Bay of Yeddo. As soon as the vessels had anchored a number of Japanese officers came on board to welcome Commodore Perry and his officers and to inform him that preparations had been made for his reception at Uraga, where

an answer from the Emperor to the President's letter would be delivered to him, and they begged that he would move his feet down to that place. Some discussion arose over this meeting place and it was finally agreed that the conference should be held in the then village of Yokohama, on account of the excellent shelter afforded by its harbor. The squadron present consisted of the steam frigates *Powhatan*, *Susquehanna* and *Mississippi*; sloops of war *Macon*, *Albatross*, *Thetis*, *Porpoise* and *Albatross*; and a schooner, *Albatross*, which was captured from the British during the War of 1812, and the *Vandalia*, with the store ships *Supply* and *John P. Kennedy*.

"We anchored in a line off the town and the Japanese set to work with a will to erect suitable buildings for the conferences. At the end of a month, the accommodations being complete, the Commodore, by appointment, landed with a suite of officers and an escort of 500 seamen and marines. He was received by five commissioners appointed by the Emperor to confer with him, consisting of the Supreme Councilor, the Prince of Tsu-Sima, the Prince of Mimi-Saki, a member of the board of revenue, and one other officer of high rank. The seamen and marines were all armed, and with drums beating, colors flying, bands playing at intervals, and the salutes fired on the arrival of the officials, the scene was a striking one. Thousands of Japanese soldiers crowded the shore and the neighboring heights, looking on with curious interest.

"The audience building was a plain frame structure containing one large room, the audience hall, and several smaller ones for the convenience of the participants. The floor was covered with mats, with prettily painted wooden screens adorning the sides. Long tables and benches covered with woolen stuff placed parallel to each other, with three handsome braziers filled with burning charcoal on the floor between them and a few violet colored crape hangings sus-

pended from the ceiling, completed the furniture of the room.

"The Americans took their seats at one end of one table, and the Japanese commissioners placed themselves at the other table opposite, while between them seated on the floor on their knees, their usual position, as they did not use chairs, was a crowd of Japanese officers forming the train of their commissioners. The business was carried on in the Dutch language, through interpreters.

"After an exchange of compliments the commissioners of Japan stated that it was the determination of the Emperor to make certain modifications in their laws of seclusion; he relied upon the friendly disposition of the Americans toward Japan, and as such negotiations were entirely novel to them they would trust with confidence to the Commodore's superior experience, to his generosity and his sense of justice. A real desire was manifested by the Japanese to cultivate friendly feelings with their guests. In fact the general bearing

of the people had already convinced the Americans that Japanese distrust of them had measurably worn away. Refreshments were served in elegantly lacquered dishes, and what was left on their plates by the Americans at the close was wrapped in papers and given them to carry away, according to the custom prevailing in Japan in those days.

"The Japanese commissioners were richly dressed in gay, silk petticoat pantaloons and upper garments resembling in shape ladies' short gowns. Dark colored stockings and two handed swords pushed through a twisted silk girdle finished the costume. Straw sandals were worn, but were always slipped off on entering the house. At that time a Japanese did not cover his head, the top and front part of which was shaved, and the back and side hair being brought up was tied so as to form a tail, three or four inches long, that extended forward upon the

shaven pate.

"The negotiations proceeded harmoniously, but, on account of the exacting and punctilious ceremony peculiar to the Japanese, very slowly. Thus a question proposed had to pass through the interpreters and then through several officers ascending in rank before it reached the commissioners; each one in turn bowing his head to the floor before he addressed his superiors.

"Among the presents intended for the Emperor were a miniature railroad track with a beautiful locomotive tender and passenger car, one-fourth the ordinary size; and a mile of magnetic telegraph line, the operations of which were exhibited on shore. These inventions excited a great deal of interest among the Japanese, particularly the telegraph, when they came to comprehend its utility in the transmission of messages, communications being made in their presence in the English and

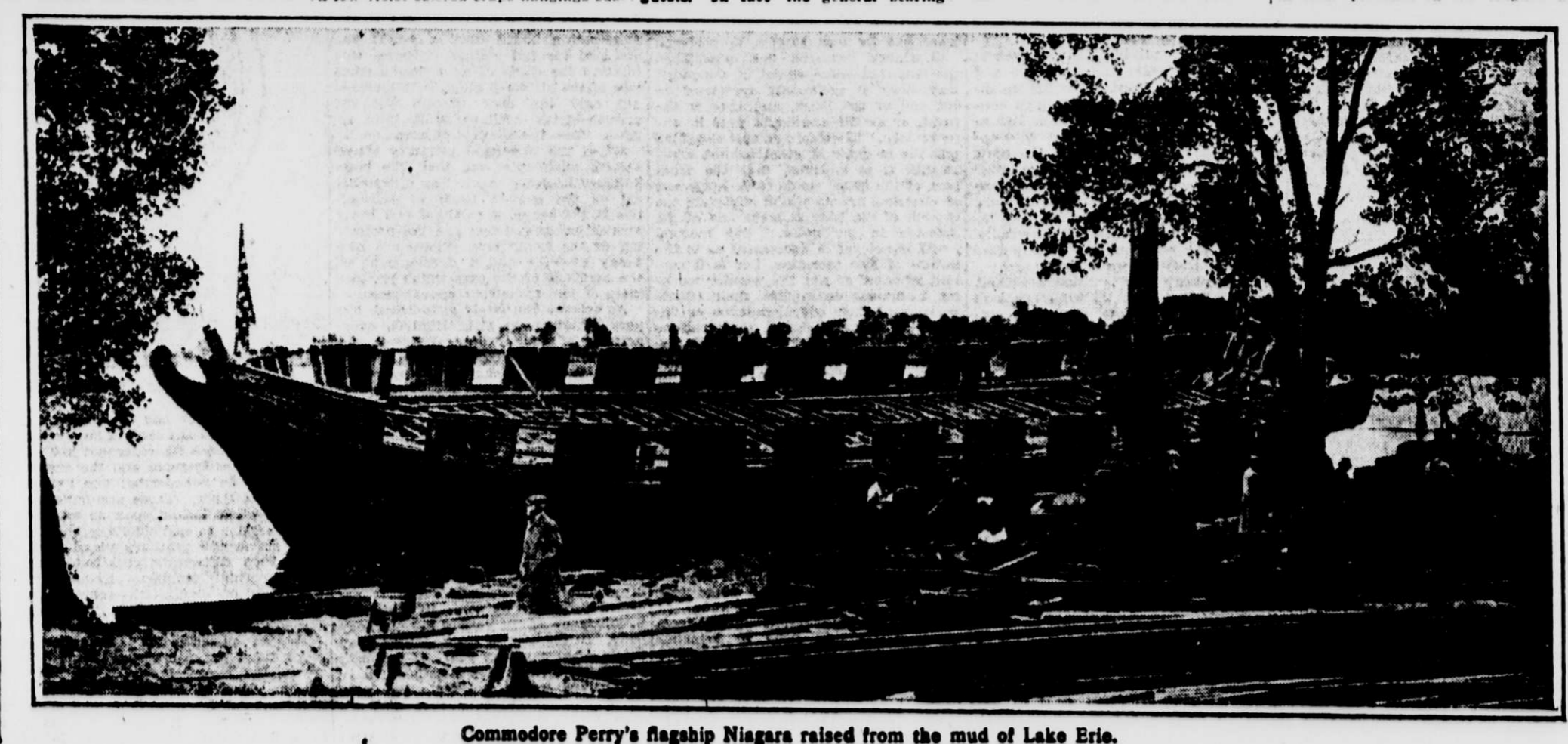
Dutch languages. They were also delighted with the railroad, when they saw the engine and car flying along the track at the rate of twenty or more an hour; they thought it would be impossible to construct them to advantage in Japan, owing to the very uneven surface of the country.

"The policy of Commodore Perry had been on both this visit and his former one to observe a strict exclusiveness, and the Japanese were on all occasions given to understand that was a desire on the part of the Americans to establish friendly relations, no unworthy restrictions or actions would be submitted to; that they came to Japan not to beg, but to dispense favors; that, conscious of the power of their Government, they were, nevertheless, desirous of meeting the Japanese on equal and honorable terms, and upon no other conditions whatever would they consent to hold amicable intercourse. The favorable effect of this course of action was very apparent. The Japanese were glad to be admitted on board the ships, and the commissioners of Nippon offered no objections to the American officers strolling about the country in the neighborhood of their anchorage.

"While the negotiations were pending Commodore Perry gave an entertainment to the Japanese commissioners on board the flagship. The engines of the steamers were put in motion, that their operation might be witnessed. The ships' companies were drilled at general quarters, and attention was called to the calibre of the heavy guns in use among Western nations. The national stoicism and self-possession of the Japanese were not proof against such novelties, and they were unable to withhold their admiration and surprise. During the festivities toasts to the Emperor and the President were drunk with all the honors.

"After returning with the United States vessels to this country, Lewis remained in the navy. During the war he was on the gunboat *Otesago*, doing patrol duty on the Albatross, when the ship was unexpectedly blown up by mines planted by the Confederates. For sixteen days the survivors remained on the shattered craft until they were picked up by the *Shamrock*, another Union gunboat. Fortunately the hurricane deck of the disabled Federal boat remained above the water line.

"After going through many adventures Lewis, at the expiration of his service in the navy, enlisted in the navy. A. Eleventh Massachusetts Infantry, at Boston, and later saw land service until the close of the war. Several medals for gallantry in action were bestowed on him.



Commodore Perry's flagship Niagara raised from the mud of Lake Erie.